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everything else. We ask in turn, is our age a poetical one, does it afford a soil rich enough to produce a real poet, one stamped by nature with the seal of immortality? We answer no. Rhyme-makers we may have, men schooled to reproduce in flowing stanzas the thoughts of others, but a poet of thought we have not, neither one of great poetical emotion, nor over affluent in the gifts of imagination. That which our age has a genius for are railroads, steamboats, commerce, trade, and financial schemes. Have we not the proof of this in the study, and constant reproduction of the real poets of former times? To these the delicately constituted and poetical minds of our times must turn if they would have food for their deeply yearning natures, sanctified homes for their shipwrecked hearts. The poems of our day are but metrical words, spiced with petty incidents to tickle the curiosity of watering-place loungers and literary pretenders. The poems of Mr. Tennyson in the volume before us are no exception. They are, if judged from a high poetical standard, the genuine children of our times, and prove that Mr. Tennyson, though a poet styled, is colored over with the unpoetical attributes of his day and generation. No blame is his, for if he were in advance of his age, he would not be the poet laureate of England, and the petted favorite of drawing-room misses and affected dandies.

Neither the construction of Mr. Tennyson's brain, nor the breadth nor depth of his heart, is such as to take in the bewildering panorama of our times, and give it that true, large and poetical crystallization which would reflect it to the eyes of a distant posterity. We want for that the severe grandeur, the searching and unsparing intellect of Milton. Our Milton would not seek an imaginary subject, a supernatural pandemonium, or supernatural agents of dark designs and deeds; he would seek them through the wide channels of real life, in the turmoil of every-day transactions, and in the black iniquity of every individual trying to build his own glory upon the ruin of the social system to which he belongs. The steel muscles, the iron joints of our commercial giants would attract his attention, while the gentle in heart and the diffident in feeling would have to be exiled from his poetical paradise. Now, Mr. Tennyson has no capacity for this mission, and in order to be the poet of this age, and to deserve the name, he would require to be the Milton of our century.

Let him then sing on in his own way; let him lie in the somnolent brains of our idlers and empty dreamers; let him be fondled by our young folks whose material ambition excludes all sentiment, all high poetical purposes; let him adorn the barren conversation of drawing-room habitués, but let him not aspire to be the poet of this age—that glory is reserved for one who may owe his birth and destiny to a happier combination of social circumstances than can be found in our day. No man with sensibility enough to reflect this age, with brain enough to comprehend it, will ever seek a poetical realization of it in the poems of Alfred Tennyson.

**THE MINISTER'S WOODING.** By Harriet Beecher Stowe. Derby & Jackson, New York.

Those persons who fancied Mrs. Stowe indissolubly bound to the slavery question, and incapable of discussing any other, will be disappointed to find that she has actually chosen a new field for the exercise of her versatile genius, and been entirely successful. To be sure, the slavery question does peep out here and there, but so timidly, and in such faint streaks, that even the most pugnacious southern editor could not find it in his heart to make it a subject of offence. The scenes are laid in

methodical New England, while the characters who figure therein are of that dry matter of fact stamp one would think it exceedingly difficult to invest with the drapery of romance. Indeed, the book is a proof of what true genius can do in the way of molding the dulllest and most prosaic materials into objects of romance. There is the same play of the imagination, the same keen sense of the ludicrous, the same flow of humor, quickly followed by deep pathos and trenchant logic—the same biting satire and hate of hypocrisy, the same clear perception of character, with the skillful handling of the plot, and power to hold the mind in suspense, that distinguished the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**THE EMPIRE OF RUSSIA.** By John S. C. Abbott. Mason Brothers, New York.

Mr. Abbott's histories are interesting as well as instructive. If, however, the guns of his genius were more carefully aimed, the result would be a better effect on the reader's mind, and perhaps increase the circle of his admirers. In other words, if Mr. Abbott could be induced to write less dramatically, to aim less at startling effects, and stick to accuracy—to deal less with the tragic in writing, and content himself with instructing the reader, his histories would be more valuable as well as entertaining to those who prefer facts to embellishments. And yet, in spite of a style far from pleasant or graceful, "The Empire of Russia" is an attractive volume, embellished with all the fascinating drapery of a romance, in which the shedding of blood and the clang of war are the all-absorbing interest. The manners and customs, the social, political, and intellectual condition of the people, Mr. Abbott treats but faintly. Indeed, it would be impossible in so small a compass as this volume presents, to give more than a brief account of the most prominent events in the history of so great an empire—one which presents to the world the most remarkable phases of transformation from barbaric darkness to light and civilization. The volume commences with Russia in her primeval state, inhabited by wandering tribes of savages, who have passed away without leaving "any monuments of their existence." The epochs of which the author then treats are rich in exciting scenes—in war, famine, violence, and indeed every crime known to human depravity. Blood incessantly flowed; now one barbarian horde laid the country in waste, and then another. The clang of war was ceaseless; barbarian was arrayed against barbarian; wars of extermination were fiercely waged, and desolation spread over the land for centuries. And yet, through all the gloom, this merciless spirit of the barbarian had cast over the land, Christianity and civilization are found struggling for an existence, and even at times casting their lights and shadows on the surface. And it is in these struggles with darkness that Christianity shows itself in all its grandeur and force. Shut out for a time by some sudden upheaving of the barbarian foe, it again blossoms forth, as if to show that its seeds, when once planted, will take root and continue to bear good fruit. There is something noble, something grand in the picture of a vast empire that has struggled through the blood and carnage of barbarism, casting off the mantle of darkness, and emerging into that state of civilization which was destined to place Russia in the proud and lofty position she now holds in the family of nations. No other land has a history so dramatically fascinating; no other nation ever struggled so manfully against adversity; no other nation ever presented so many diverse elements of government, or brought order out of chaos under so many discouraging circumstances and in so short a period. The metal of her nationality was

always sound, and while her neighbors were yielding to the imposture of fanatic minds, her faith in reason and Christianity remained unshaken. It is, indeed, instructive to see how, even in the darker periods of her history, she sought to introduce the mechanical arts, to develop her internal resources, to encourage commerce, to establish a liberal and enlightened system of intercourse with other nations, to make science, art, and literature work out their grandest problems for the benefit of her civilization, as she then understood it.

We shall return to this volume in our next issue. In the meantime we would say to the student of history, as well as the general reader, that they will find "The Empire of Russia" both invaluable and interesting.

**SYLVIA'S WORLD.** By the author of "Busy Moments of an Idle Woman," "Lily," etc. Derby & Jackson, New York.

Our readers are mostly of an amiable turn, and have a rare love for the sparkling. If, however, any of them be courageous enough to undertake the reading of the dullest book within our knowledge, we would recommend "Sylvia's World." It is a melancholy example of a wearisome and very trashy book—a book which we venture to assert only a New York publisher could have been found good-natured enough to undertake. We never see so much good paper and binding wasted without a pang of regret—regret that the volume is a proof of the intellectual inferiority of our authors when compared with those of other nations, and regret that we have publishers who will permit ambitious females to practise such jokes on our literary reputation. No doubt the author intended well, and therein we can sympathize with her, and regret the weakness which prompted her to make such a pitiful show of her shortcomings, as well as her contempt for all the rules of authorship. We must not forget to mention that "Sylvia's World" is a novel of 384 pages, 212 of which make up one long, dreary and unbroken chapter—enough to send one into a state of melancholy for at least a week, even in fine weather. As for plot, there is not the shadow of one that we could discern. The characters, which the author would have us believe are all ladies and gentlemen, talk very vulgarly at times, and indeed in a style we at the North are not accustomed to hear, though, for all we know, it may be quite common in the South. Let us admit, however, that the book may be extremely useful to ladies in robust health, young ladies about to try their hand at novel writing, and clergymen about to preach probationary sermons.

**BEULAH: A NOVEL.** By Augusta J. Evans. Derby & Jackson, New York.

One finds relief in turning from so feeble and dull an effort at authorship as "Sylvia's World," to a work so rich of fine, subtle, nervous energy, so impressive in its teachings, so radiant of the good that flows from an earnest heart, so powerfully written, and so healthy of tone, as *Beulah*. Its pictures, if not always painted with the strictest regard to nature, are at least handled with great delicacy. Indeed, we have in *Beulah*, if not a great work, at least one that discovers in the author a well balanced mind, capable of deep thought, and of producing something greater in the future. That the action of that mind is at times impaired by a strong inclination to melancholy, is too apparent to be overlooked. This being Miss Evans' first book, we predict for her a bright future in authorship, since it is rather what *Beulah* promises than what *Beulah* is as an achievement. Some of our contemporaries urge that *Beulah* is a perfect, and even a great novel. With this we cannot

agree. The book possesses all the merits we have ascribed to it, deep thought, pathos, the earnestness of a heart and soul bent on doing good, and a purpose high and noble. But Miss Evans is not skilled in novel writing. As a literary artist she by no means rises above mediocrity. The faults of *Beulah* are those of a builder rather than a designer. For admitting that the book contains much true poetry, deep pathos, and even fine diction, it is faulty in construction while the plot, which is feeble indeed, is badly conceived and clumsily developed. However much we may be inclined to praise the author's command of logic and descriptive powers, we cannot speak unqualifiedly of her dialogue, which not only lacks light and shade, but is dull and even tedious at times. Most of her characters are either pious, stern, or eccentric; young or old, they unfortunately all talk like highly educated people, and with an air of seriousness scarcely reconcilable with their age or condition in life. But these, it must be borne in mind, are faults that can be easily remedied, and we have referred to them in the spirit of friendship rather than censure. Nor would the author lose anything with her readers if she would study authors less and human nature more. Readers prefer the rich and varied fruits of a clever author's mind, and care but little how much they have studied the works of others, nor how deep they may have delved into the mysteries of sectarianism.

**OUT OF THE DEPTHS; OR, THE STORY OF A WOMAN'S LIFE.** W. A. Townsend & Co.

This is a reprint of an English work—the history of a frail woman, who has been low down in the depths of a life of shame, repented and become a Christian. The book has given rise to much diversity of opinion among English critics, not only as to its literary merits, but its influence on society. The religious press becomes its advocate, unites in praising the object and spirit of the writer, and concludes by commending it to the perusal of all as a missionary that cannot fail to do good. Secular journals like the *Saturday Review* and *Athenæum* wage a fierce war against it, declaring it an unfit book to place in the hands of young females. The book probably had its origin in the recent movement in England to devise means for the suppression of the crime of prostitution. It is written with great power, and although the story is that of a frail woman's life, such is the delicacy with which the author (evidently skilled in composition) draws the picture that not even the most fastidious could find in it a line to cause a blush. It is a simple story—a story any of the denizens of Little Portland street might make her own—well told, and true to the life. Keeping the motive in view, as well as the spirit of purity that pervades the book, we can even overlook the straining after religious sentimentality which detracts from the interest of the latter portion of the work.

**A LIFE FOR A LIFE.** By Miss Muloch. Harper & Brothers.

To our way of thinking, this volume is not equal, either in literary merit or interest, to John Halifax. And yet it is a bold, instructive, and even fascinating book, with pictures of English life drawn by the hand of an artist. There is the same clear insight into human nature, the same clever dissecting of its most eccentric elements, the same graceful and pure style, that distinguish all we get from the pen of this gifted lady. The readers of John Halifax will find in this book an entirely new field for the exercise of their admiration.